

The old saying “in like a lion, out like a lamb” is often used to describe the much anticipated change in weather that takes place during the month of March. During this month, we make the transition from the end of winter to the beginning of spring. The hours of daylight increase and the temperatures warm up as well. As a matter of fact, the seasonal average high temperatures increase more between the first and last days of March of any other month of the year (Table 1).

Location	Mar 1st Highs	Mar 31st Highs	Warm up
Fort Dodge	37	52	+15
Mason City	34	48	+14
Waterloo	38	52	+14
Des Moines	41	55	+14
Creston	41	54	+13
Ottumwa	42	55	+13

Table 1: The table above shows the average high temperature (1971-2000) for a few locations across central Iowa during the first (orange) and last (red) days of the month of March. The difference is shown in the yellow column.

However, this year the temperatures started out cooler than normal, and ended cool as well. As a matter of fact, this year one could argue that a more accurate saying might be “in like a lion, out like a lion”. As the graph on the following page shows, seven of the first 10 days were below normal in Des Moines. This was followed by ten of 12 days which were above normal in the middle of the month, and the final 9 days were below normal. At Waterloo, a similar trend is shown. Six of the first 10 days were below normal, and nine of the next 11 days were above normal. Of the last 10 days of March, nine of them were below normal (Figure 1).

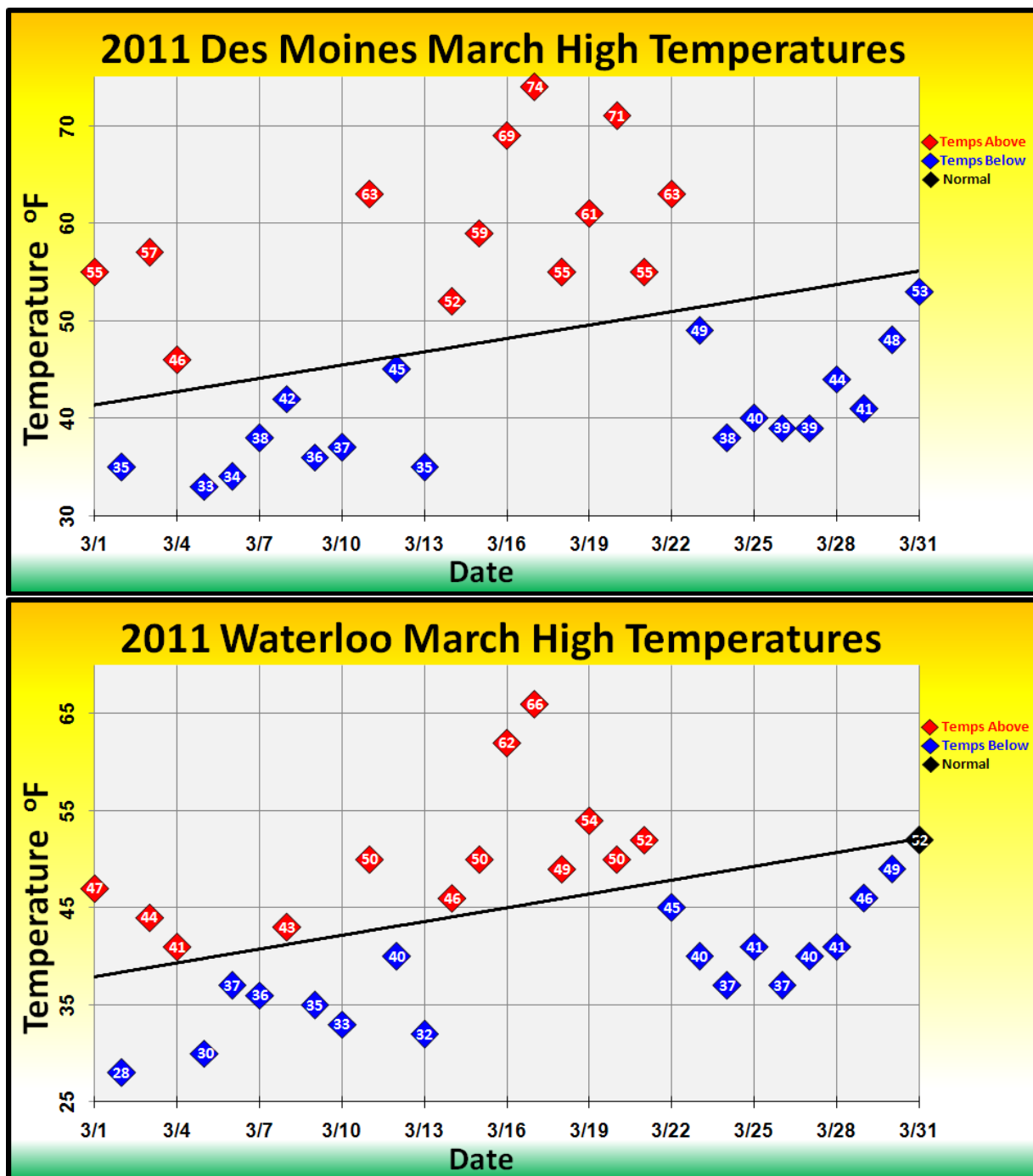


Figure 1: The two graphs above show the both the normal and observed temperature at Des Moines (top) and Waterloo (bottom) for March 2011. The 30-year seasonal average temperatures for each location are represented by the black line. The red diamonds show those temperatures which were above normal, while the blue diamonds indicate those temperatures which were below normal.